



County of Los Angeles
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street, Room 713, Los Angeles, California 90012
(213) 974-1101
<http://ceo.lacounty.gov>

WILLIAM T FUJIOKA
Chief Executive Officer

March 28, 2014

Board of Supervisors

GLORIA MOLINA
First District

MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS
Second District

ZEV YAROSLAVSKY
Third District

DON KNABE
Fourth District

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
Fifth District

To: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: William T Fujioka
Chief Executive Officer

MOTION TO DIRECT THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE TO ADD AS A PRIORITY ITEM TO THE COUNTY'S LEGISLATIVE AGENDA THE \$33.1 MILLION BUDGET REQUEST BY THE CALIFORNIA SUPREME COURT CHIEF JUSTICE FOR DEPENDENCY COURT APPOINTED COUNSEL; AND SEND A FIVE-SIGNATURE LETTER TO THE GOVERNOR AND THE LEGISLATURE CALLING FOR THEIR APPROVAL OF THIS REQUEST (ITEM NO. 3, AGENDA OF APRIL 1, 2014)

Item No. 3 on the April 1, 2014 Agenda is a motion by Supervisor Ridley-Thomas to:

1. Direct the Chief Executive Officer to add as a priority item to the Los Angeles County's Legislative Agenda the \$33.1 million budget request for dependency court appointed counsel as made by the Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court; and
2. Immediately send a five-signature letter to the California Legislature including the Governor, Senate and Assembly, specifically to the Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 5, calling for them to approve the \$33.1 million budget request to reduce caseloads for dependency court appointed counsel made by the California Supreme Court Chief Justice.

Background

Currently, attorneys appointed by the State to represent abused and neglected children and their parents average an estimated 250 clients per lawyer. According to a 2008 Judicial Council's Caseload Study, the basic caseload standard for representing children in foster care is a maximum of 188 clients, while the optimal standard is a maximum of 77 clients per attorney. In Los Angeles County, it is estimated that children's attorneys represent over 300 children each.

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective And Caring Service"

*Please Conserve Paper – This Document and Copies are Two-Sided
Intra-County Correspondence Sent Electronically Only*

Budget Proposal for Dependency Court Appointed Counsel

On January 14, 2014, California Supreme Court Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye introduced a blueprint outlining what is needed over three years to restore and improve access to justice in California in light of unprecedented State Budget cuts since 2008. The blueprint includes a budget proposal to provide a \$33.1 million increase per year, from FY 2014-15 through FY 2016-17, under the Judiciary Budget for court-appointed dependency counsel for parents and neglected children to reduce caseloads from the current rate of 250 clients per attorney to 188. According to the California Supreme Court Chief Justice, parents and children involved in court dependency proceedings rely on court-appointed dependency counsel and the fund that serves this need is inadequate.

There are no specific details about this budget proposal at this time, however, further information is expected to be released as this proposal is scheduled to be heard in the Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 5 on Public Safety on April 9, 2014, and in the Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 5 on Corrections, Public Safety and the Judiciary on April 10, 2014. This proposal is supported by the Children's Law Center of California and the County Welfare Directors Association. There is no known opposition at this time.

The Department of Children and Family Services indicates that it is in the best interest of the child to have quality time with their attorney.

Conclusion

Support of this motion is consistent with existing Board-approved policy to support proposals that enhance and improve child safety, and to support proposals to streamline Dependency Court procedures while ensuring the safety and best interests of children.

Therefore, this office recommends approval of the motion for the Board to support the \$33.1 million budget proposal for dependency court appointed counsel as requested by the California Supreme Court Chief Justice, and to send a five-signature letter to the California Legislature including the Governor, Senate and Assembly, and the Assembly and Senate Budget Subcommittees, calling for their approval of this budget request.

WTF:RA
MR:OR:ma

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel